

THE INVENTION CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for marking a foodstuff with a mark comprising:
an ink free apparatus for etching a mark on a foodstuff; and
a spray gun for spraying a food grade coloring over the etched mark.
- 5 2. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, further including a controller for
controlling the operation of said spray gun.
3. An apparatus as defined in claim 2, wherein said controller also controls the
operation of said ink free apparatus.
4. An apparatus as defined in claim 3, further including a conveyor for conveying
10 the foodstuff past said spray gun.
5. An apparatus as defined in claim 4, wherein said conveyor also conveys the
foodstuff past said ink free apparatus.
6. An apparatus as defined in claim 4, wherein said conveyor is capable of
moving at variable speeds.
- 15 7. An apparatus as defined in claim 4, further including a shaft encoder
associated with said conveyor for recording the speed of said conveyor and outputting
a signal to said controller regarding the speed of said conveyor.
8. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said spray gun is spaced from the
foodstuff a predetermined distance.

9. An apparatus as defined in claim 5, wherein said predetermined distance is a minimum of three inches to a maximum of seven inches.
10. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said spray gun is spaced from said ink free apparatus by three inches to six inches.
- 5 11. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said ink free apparatus is one of a laser and a printer head.
12. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, further including an air knife for blowing air onto the foodstuff after the food grade coloring has been applied by said spray gun.
- 10 13. A method of marking a foodstuff with a mark comprising the steps of:
providing a foodstuff;
providing an ink free apparatus;
providing a spray gun capable of spraying a food grade coloring;
moving the foodstuff past said ink free apparatus;
using said ink free apparatus to etch a mark on said foodstuff;
15 moving the foodstuff past said spray gun; and
using the spray gun to spray food grade coloring on said mark.
14. A method as defined in claim 13, further including the steps of providing controller; and using said controller to control said ink free apparatus and said spray gun.
- 20 15. A method as defined in claim 14, further including the steps of providing a conveyor; placing said foodstuff onto said conveyor for moving said foodstuff past said ink free apparatus and said spray gun.

16. A method as defined in claim 15, further including the steps of providing a shaft encoder associated with said conveyor for recording the speed of said conveyor and outputting a signal to said controller regarding the speed of said conveyor.

5 17. A method as defined in claim 13, further including the step of inputting a desired mark into said controller.

18. A method as defined in claim 13, further including the steps of using said controller to determine a length of the mark etched on said foodstuff by said ink free apparatus and thereafter determine the length of time the spray gun needs to be fired to cover said mark, and firing said spray gun said predetermined time.

10 19. A method as defined in claim 18, further including the step of using said controller to determine when said mark on said foodstuff is under said spray gun.